"A motley mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping
Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
In sight, then amidst the forestry
Of masts, a wilderness of steeples peeping
On tip-toe, through their sea-coal canopy;
A huge, dun cupola, like a foolscap crown
On a fool's head,—and there is London town."

In the poet's imagination, the huge dome is the sole distinguishing feature of the City, and what painter could idealise the capital without its crowning crest? Thus, every visitor and traveller, either native or foreign, wends his way, on his arrival, to contemplate the fabric of [illegible] Wren's master mind.

After toiling [illegible] up Ludgate-hill, with an occasional [illegible] a slice of the principal front, steering [illegible] throng of persons, all of whom appear to be a minute too late, the lover of architecture arrives at the corner of the churchyard, as the area around the cathedral is called. Here he finds the pathway and roadway, which encircle the edifice, narrowed by a heavy and supremely ugly iron railway, erected on a dwarf wall. The concourse of pedestrians, porters, cabs, omnibuses, coaches, carts, and waggons, are constantly choking the way, to the infinite profit of a numerous progeny of pickpockets, who readily detect a stranger, by his gaze on the architectural glories before him, the price of permission to view them being the abstraction of a handkerchief, a snuff-box, a purse, or a pocket-book. The Mansion-house police reports constantly register the active performances of this peculiar race of small depredators. The visiter may look wistfully to escape from the wire-drawing of the moving population in the confined circuit, by hoping to indulge his reveries within the three gates of the enclosure, but that they are rarely opened is proclaimed by their dirty condition, and the abundant stains of pollution. The passage on the northern side could not permit the transit of vehicles from its extreme narrowness, without danger; every one thrusts through the crowd here in a hurry—a crowd much augmented by the shewy shops of a bazaar of silk-mercers, haberdashers, milliners, and ladies' cap-makers, attracting the gaze of the fair sex. Here, with their countenances rivetted on the pretty things seen through the plate-glass windows, they present an obstruction of bustles and flounces, while the City men, to save apologizing for accidental concussions of Crinoline (compliments are not profuse among wholesale traders), dart along almost in the longitudinal kennel which runs parallel with the church-yard enclosure. In this channel of stagnant and peripatetic vitality, the true Londoner may be detected with Cuvier-like perspicacity by his earnest walk and unshifting eye, as he wriggles through the current. A business man who has for 20 years run this gauntlet twice a-day at least, felt surprised and doubted the fact, when he was informed that a large portion of the enclosure at the north-east corner was a burial-ground, filled with tombs and grave-stones; he had never ventured to let a look wander so far. The City blades have made it a standing subject of wagers whether or not there is a tree growing within St. Paul's church-yard, so little was the locality ever made a subject of contemplation or remark.

Having already described a kennel running close by the wall of the enclosure, on the northern side, there will be found no fewer than seventeen tributary open cast-iron gutters leading from the habitations across the pavement, discharging their contents into the main stream. These transverse gutters are very suspicious of soap suds or dish washings—as some of them were streaming to the main channel during the intensely frosty days; the longitudinal grand gutter did not consequently get a holiday through the low temperature, but was active in conducting the specious fluid into the large gratings of the sewer which are studded at intervals. The open jaws of these cavernous deposits may not emit the sweetest of breaths; at least no violets bloom on their brinks. To increase olfactory attractions, a bevy of omnibuses have made a terminus of one portion, where the continued presence of horses adds to the aforesaid kennel a tolerable volume of stable droppings, which a troop of live fowls are incessantly occupied in tossing about. Further on, and opposite the official abode of some of the church dignitaries, a stand is erected for porters to rest their loads thereon, and the wall is here largely desecrated in the same manner that defiles the gates of the area in front of the edifice. The graveyard at the north-east corner completes the condition of the northern side: of such an adjunct the voice of reprobation has already spoken with trumpet tongue. A cab-stand occupies part of the southern side, and another on the eastern side, both obstructive to locomotive circulation.

It has always been regretted that London's greatest architectural ornament should be so barred from an adequate view. The enormous value of house property here has hitherto rendered any expansion of space a serious question of expenditure. The house of Messrs. Butler, at the north-east corner, and that of Messrs. Goodyear, the corner of Watling-street, appear built purposely to create impediments. An angular slice from the fronts of Messrs. Hitchcock and Allanson, on the north side, would restore much of an evenness of line there, and these removals would be of comparatively small cost. But how much greater would be the advantages of display, if the ugly iron railing were demolished, and the entire area paved and made open, like Trafalgar-square, or the space opposite the Royal Exchange. The ruinous condition of the wall on which the cumbrous railing is fixed, will eventually throw it down, unless the influence of good sense should add an embellishment to the city of London, instead of perpetuating an obstruction, until time shall make the dwarf wall a heap of ruins, crushed by the massive weight it bears. Ample room would be obtained for the traffic, by enlarging the roadway on the south side, and the two cab-stands would become no inconvenience if provided for on the south-eastern space. The majestic portico would rise into due consequence, as well as the beautiful semi-circular ones of the transepts. Between the steps of the northern portico and the railing, twenty feet more of width would be added to the thoroughfare. What is now redolent of many evils, would become a great improvement and ornament of the metropolis, a source of enjoyment to the cultivated class of inhabitants and visiters, as well as causing the abolition of a constricted circulation in its present impure and nasty state. The open areas recently added at Trafalgar-square and the Royal Exchange, afford delightful breathing room to enjoy the scenes around, a kind of refuge from the sweeping torrent of the multitude in the incessant pursuit of mundane matters. There is no apprehension of the steps of the portico being infested by improper persons, as may be already evidenced at St. Martin's Church and the Royal Exchange. The presence of a single policeman would always ensure due propriety and decency.

AN IDLER IN LONDON.

ARCHITECTURAL LIBRARIES.—Sir: I was much pleased with the remarks of B. in your last as to the Architectural Association, and as I conceive it to be the duty of all members of the profession to put forth any suggestion that shall tend to strengthen the hands of that association, I would submit a proposition for the promotion of a society in connection therewith, for enabling each person becoming a member within a certain period to see all, and be in possession of some, architectural books of his own selection. This I conceive might be done by every member subscribing a certain sum per month, having a right from time to time, as the funds of the society permit, first of drawing numbers on the list, and then in virtue of being one of certain numbers selecting a work of not more than a certain price (unless they pay the difference); parties having paid their subscriptions to be entitled to draw, but those who have not paid up to within a certain period, or who have not subscribed a certain sum by the drawing day, to be disqualified for that time. Or something might be done in the way of an ordinary book club; the work purchased, after having been circulated, being put up to auction amongst the members.

C.

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, CHESTER.

WE are happy to learn that the spirit of restoration is stirring in Chester. A subscription is being raised for the purpose of renovating St. Michael's Church, and a design has been decided upon for repairing the tower (which is now in a very dilapidated and dangerous state) by competition, the successful party being Mr. James Harrison, of that city. The other architects that competed were Messrs. Hodkinson, Welch, and Park. The expense of the work will probably be about 600*l*. The present structure is of the Early English style of architecture, plain in character. The chancel was added to it in 1494, and enlarged in 1678. The present tower was built in 1610, and (like most of the other ecclesiastical edifices of that city) of the soft perishable red sand-stone of the district; and the consequent decomposed and weather-beaten aspect of the exterior gives it an appearance of greater antiquity. "This circumstance," says an historian, "seems to have caught the attention of Dean Swift. When this wit was once on his way from London to Dublin, he stopped for some time at the Yacht Inn, in Watergate-street; and being alone, sent an invitation to several clergymen in the city to dine and spend the evening with him. Not one of them, however made his appearance, upon which the Dean vented his spleen in the following epigrammatic philippic:—

"The church and clergy of this city
Are very near akin;
They're weather beaten all without,
And *empty* all within."

It is intended to restore the tower of the church in the same style of architecture, but of a more ornamental character (?) to strengthen the pillars that support it, and to add buttresses at the angles. It is proposed to case the whole of the exterior of the tower with *red sand-stone* varying from 18 inches to 10 inches in thickness, and, it is said, of same quality of stone that has given so many proofs of its inapplicability for work of this character. It was proposed to cover this tower with Portland cement, but the building committee have prudently abandoned that intention.

BLIND BUILDERS, OXFORD.

As you are ready at all times to expose the present injurious system of competition, which the building business is subject to, I beg you will accept of the subjoined list of tenders delivered on the 17th ultimo, for refitting the parish church at Hooknorton, Oxon. The drawings were made by Mr. Underwood, architect, of this city, and the most explicit information given, yet a dozen builders are found whose opinions vary in such an extraordinary degree upon so small a work.

So long as builders continue to rush blindly into competition at all hazards of sacrificing not only their time but their capital also, so long will the *London Gazette* teem, as of late, with the names of those engaged in this department of commerce—and so long will private individuals and committees cling to a system which in itself both tends to the ruin of the respectable tradesman, and to result in the abominable practice of executing the work by employing improper craftsmen, and bad and unseasoned materials, which cannot fail to end in the mortification of those with whom the direction and the choice are placed:—

	£	s.	d.
Lockwood, London	895	0	0
Symms, Oxford	798	14	0
Cowley, Oxford	754	15	0
Davis, Banbury	743	17	6
Long, Witney	729	15	0
Franklin, Deddington	720	0	0
Plowman and Hack, Oxford	697	0	0
Wyatt, Oxford	687	0	0
Strong, Stow-in-the-Wold (accepted)	585	0	0
Herbert, Chipping Norton	575	0	0
Claridge, Banbury	546	2	0
Mackrory, Great Milton	499	10	0

Amongst other lists recently forwarded to us is one of tenders for a new shop-front in Pall-mall East. The highest of five is 620*l*. (a highly respectable London firm); the lowest 340*l*.

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